

## Interview with Charles Rutton: the agricultural marathons (The Hague, 29 November 2006)

**Source:** Interview de Charles Rutton / CHARLES RUTTON, Étienne Deschamps, prise de vue : François Fabert.- La Haye: CVCE [Prod.], 29.11.2006. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (00:02:56, Couleur, Son original).

**Copyright:** (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview\\_with\\_charles\\_rutton\\_the\\_agricultural\\_marathons\\_the\\_hague\\_29\\_november\\_2006-en-c8a07bef-e12c-461b-b82e-54ceff32b5co.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview_with_charles_rutton_the_agricultural_marathons_the_hague_29_november_2006-en-c8a07bef-e12c-461b-b82e-54ceff32b5co.html)



**Last updated:** 05/07/2016

## Interview with Charles Rutten: the agricultural marathons (The Hague, 29 November 2006)

[Étienne Deschamps] During all those years at the Permanent Representation in Brussels in the 1960s, you also — I imagine — witnessed or were directly involved in what were called the famous ‘agricultural marathons’. Could you tell us a little about them and say something about your recollections of those interminable and extremely complicated discussions?

[Charles Rutten] Well, it developed over time, it wasn’t a system that was set up at the outset, but developed gradually, because the talks on ... particularly, agricultural issues were technical but also extremely political. Because, in all Member States, agriculture and farmers played a very important political role. So, agriculture ministers had to be very careful about what they approved or rejected.

Over time, this system gave rise to marathons, which in practice meant a system of gradual isolation. Gradually, first the low-ranking officials were asked to leave the room, followed by the directors-general and finally the permanent representatives, leaving just the ministers in the room. And being isolated allowed them, in a certain number of cases, to reach an agreement. Because if you are a minister and you have a Director-General at your back all the time telling you, ‘Sir, it’s totally out of the question, out of the question; it will never be accepted back home. You mustn’t accept it ...’ Then it’s difficult to reach a compromise that goes beyond what the Directors-General would be willing to accept. That’s how it developed and it was sometimes very tough. Personally, I, by definition, never attended the final stage, but it was not always successful. Sometimes it went on till 6 o’clock in the morning, still without any agreement. They had to come back a week later. But really that is the way the common agricultural policy was developed and implemented.